

The Hungering Heart

By Jean Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., WFS Founder

Life is a conglomeration of problems, surprises, a few extraordinary events, and boredom. That we ever manage getting through it in a reasonable fashion has always surprised me, given the truths one comes to know with the passage of time and the acquisition of a certain chronological age.

That life can be so exhilarating at times and then, turn into the most boring, lonely, and painful existence is, in itself, one of life's mysteries. And if we search for reasons why we tried to escape, I suppose all of the above would somewhat explain our behavior. Perhaps not, since we seem to experience the very same feelings when we are not drinking.

All of this suggests that we must search for an answer, a way in which we can live and overcome the debilitation of painful events. In this day and age of the computer, what better solution than to think of a "program". Of course, trying to reduce life to a method of living that comes from a program sounds rather artificial and certainly simplistic, yet it is possible to educate ourselves in "methods" that help us with living and overcoming and, finally, in triumphing. Many of us begin our days with inspirational reading, with meditation, with a way in which to mold our first daily thoughts in order to have a frame of reference for that day's tribulations.

And so I should like to recommend thinking about using the 13 Program Statements in a method of stair climbing as a recipe for a dynamic life, one that provides that strength and self-knowledge necessary to happiness.

The WFS "New Life" Program came into existence officially in 1976. Actually, I was probably gathering those statements for a few years before the official copyrighting, for it was the way I had learned to live, the way in which I changed the way I lived. Then, sometime in 1987-88, there came a gradual way in which I began to view the 13 Statements. Prior to the late 1980's, I often said that the statements could be used in any order one chose to use them, to learn them, to take them into one's life.

And that is still quite true. However, there is a stepwise progression of accepting the statements that provides a more organized way of looking for a solution to life. This method of using the statements is being referred to as the program "levels". Perhaps you have seen the literature that now shows the statements in the levels, because we are starting to distribute the program statements in both ways.

Looking at the levels approach, we see a stepwise pattern for growth.

Level 1 (Statement #1) – Acceptance of our alcoholism (or other addictions). Having the knowledge that we have a physical disorder that we must acknowledge, and accept, as having.

Level 2 (Statements #2, 4, 9) – Now we are ready to move on to the acknowledgement that much of our approach to life has not been the best approach and that we can

change our approach to life and its problems by changing our attitude. This is when we spend large chunks of time with a pencil and a notebook and we begin to write down our attitudes about everything. It is a time for total honesty and recognition of our negative thinking, whatever it may encompass.

At this level, we not only are to recognize our negativities but we also must recognize that we are willing to do something about them.

This level may be the most difficult and take the longest period of time than any other stage of recovery with our program.

Level 3 (Statements #5, 12) – Since we have accepted, acknowledged and removed our negative attitudes, we now move up one more notch and fill that vacuum, this time with positive thoughts about ourselves and our lives and our attitudes. This phase of our moving onward and upward begins to be a very happy time, for we begin to see rather clearly how we made ourselves miserable with all of our former negative thinking. Now we begin to learn the value of a positive environment in our thoughts. Good thoughts, pleasant thoughts, positive thoughts now form the skeleton of our day's events. We begin our day's thinking process by acknowledging the value of ourselves as a contributing person to life's process. We begin to see that the good that comes to us we made possible by our thinking about it first. We know now, once and for all, that we create the world we live in by our thoughts.

Level 4 (Statements #3, 6, 11) – This level can almost be called the icing on the cake, for this level is the putting of additional positive attitudes into our lives. We add enthusiasm; we add happiness, having learned that it is an attitude we little understood before, that happiness is relative and that it is at hand wherever and whenever we choose to acknowledge it. This level teaches us to recognize that what we feel is dependent upon us to create. Happiness, enthusiasm, and appreciation of life itself are entirely in our hands to do with as we choose. We can create and live these attitudes or we can turn our back on life and slip back into Level 2 and those nasty old negative thoughts.

Level 5 (Statements #7, 10) – In our progression upward into becoming a whole and renewed person, we are now at the place that is probably the most difficult for us all: that is to be a loving person, one who loves and who accepts love. Both of these are extremely difficult, for most of us fear being hurt and rejected and turned away. This has often been our history and we have become insulted beyond giving and accepting. Some of us have become bitter, angry, unyielding, and even vitriolic at times. Perhaps I was wrong in saying that Level 2 was the most difficult. Perhaps this level is, for we must reveal ourselves, we must put our feelings on the line.

Getting to this level in our climb to happiness and stability may be a stumbling block, for it requires us to be real, to be giving and receiving, it asks us to express our feelings and it asks us to be vulnerable to possible hurt. But we also open ourselves to the possibility of the greatest happiness anyone can know... love.

Level 6 (Statements #8, 13) – Our final stage of development is one more esoteric than the other stages, for it is our spiritual development, which is a very personal matter for

each of us. But this stage can surely be the most fruitful and personal. It is also the stage that requires the most careful nurturance.

This final stage sees us at the level of self-responsibility enhanced with emotional and spiritual growth.

The WFS “New Life” Program provides us with a way of life. It is a program for personal growth. It goes far beyond our seeing ourselves as persons with a drinking problem. That is merely the beginning. We have a long way to go and the “New Life” Program offers a way. Over the years of its history, thousands of women have found a way to happiness and peace and a liberation to do and be all that each of us can be.

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Comments from Cookie:

I truly love this article! I believe everyone would benefit from reading this article every few months. Our disease was one of instant gratification. We lived our lives wanting and experiencing immediate changes. Alcohol is one of the fastest reacting drugs, changing our brain chemistry with record speeds. Combine the drug with our negative *automatic* thoughts, learned from years of low (or no) self-esteem, and we have created one huge obstacle to overcome. Jean’s “New Life” Program provides the guidelines necessary to break through this self imposed prison.

Creating our new life is a *process*. The definition of the word “process” is a series of actions that achieve an end or result with a passage of time. I see so many women become discouraged in the beginning because change isn’t occurring fast enough. Time constraints have no place in recovery. Each of us will create a new life by a conscious effort.

I see our Thirteen Statements as levels of awareness. Certainly before we can make any changes in our lives we must accept the disease of alcoholism. Then we may become aware of that *automatic* negative thinking and start replacing it with life-saving positive thinking. We begin to add joy into our lives. I spent a very long time learning to recognize my negative thoughts. Now my positive thoughts are *automatic*, with negative thinking feeling “out of place.”

It took us years to come to the end of our drinking days. That was also a process. My “disease” is in total remission as I have removed alcohol from my life. But, my recovery is a life long process. Thank you Jean for providing a Program designed for women. The thirteen positive affirmations certainly saved my life, which is still in the process of changing!